

NEW
SERIES

FEBRUARY

VOL.
42

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM
YEAR TO YEAR."

All the Year Round
&
Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS

PART 231.

PRICE
ELEVENPENCE.

LONDON
26 WELLINGTON ST
STRAND.
W.C.

1888.

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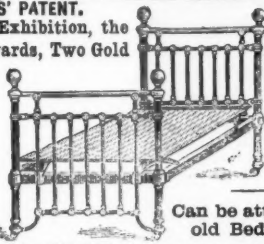
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CHARLES DICKENS

No. 1001. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1888.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

"A LEAL LASS."

By RICHARD ASHE KING.

CHAPTER V.

CHARACTERISTIC CORRESPONDENCE.

AFTER these three chapters explaining the kind of informal engagement between May and Hugh, we return to the date at which our story opens.

Why should the worthiest women worship so often the most worthless of men? A little girl often prefers a bald, broken-nosed, wooden wreck of a doll to all her exquisitely-dressed and featured "men of wax," and she grows up to show the same morbid preference for the most worthless of her admirers, as a maiden; and of her sons, as a mother.

Anyhow, we have no better reason than this to give for the worship which his mother and sister lavished on Fred Beresford, an irredeemably worthless youth. Perhaps it was their worship which caused his worthlessness, and not his worthlessness which evoked their worship—or, in a word, perhaps he was spoiled. And so, no doubt, he was; but spoiling, if it makes a man selfish, does not make him mean and sly, as Fred was, in spite of his genial, frank, and pleasant manner. Besides, spoiling could hardly make him more selfish than he was by nature. Such as he was, however, he was worshipped by both his mother and sister, who set down those of his faults which they could see to the thoughtlessness of youth, and even to its generosity; for Fred had a happy knack of inventing such generous or affectionate reasons for his most selfish acts, as took in completely these ingenuous worshippers.

"Trinity College, Cambridge.

"DEAR OLD MAY,—Thanks, awfully, for the money, which took me out of an ugly hole. I hope it didn't cost you another dress, as I want you to look your best for Gower, who is already in love with your photo! I fancy it was the sight of it that made him so keen about coming, as I wasn't at all pressing in my invitation, for I knew that the 'gov.' would cut up rough about it. He seems to think I can live in College without knowing any one, or spending anything; but a fellow must be as slow as a snail to live in his shell here, and that, you know, is not in my line at all. I can't help making friends; and, of course, I have to be friendly in turn; though this, to tell you the truth, was not my only—or my chief—reason for asking Gower down. I thought he would put a bit of life into the house, and amuse you—I am sure you want it, with no one to speak to but that dismal little Spratt, who is as slow as a hearse-horse; so I asked Gower as the most likely of our lot to enliven you. Watch your chance, like a dear old woman, to coax the 'gov.' into sending me some money, as I am frightfully hard up, and really hardly know how I'm to get home. It wouldn't do to ask Gower for a loan, as it would look too like demanding payment for his lodging; wouldn't it? Yet I really don't know how else to raise twenty pounds; I don't indeed. I cannot tell you how mean I felt in having to ask you again for your allowance; and I shall be just miserable till I can pay you back. Now, twenty pounds from the 'gov.' would lighten a little of this load, as well as free me here and frank me home. Do coax him into sending it, May, dear. He can't refuse you anything. Who could? Ever, dear old May, your very affectionate brother, FRED BERESFORD."

It would not require a deep knowledge of Fred's character to suggest to any one who read this letter—to any one but his mother and sister—that his unselfish reasons for asking Gower and needing twenty pounds were canting after-thoughts. May, however, had not the shadow of a doubt that one of his motives for asking this Mr. Gower was consideration for her; and that one of his motives, if not his main motive, for coveting this twenty pounds, was his longing to pay her back half of it. Yet May had been taken in hundreds of times before by this plausible Fred, who, for a young man, was singularly proficient in the art of passing base coin for gold in this canting way.

Curiously enough, Fred himself came to believe in these spurious coins after he had succeeded for some time in passing them. When he had alleged some unselfish motive for a piece of pure selfishness two or three times, he began to believe that this motive really had had something to do with inspiring the act, and he would then accept May's or his mother's acknowledgement of his magnanimity as his due.

On the other hand, no one was more keenly alive to the shortcomings of others toward himself. Like all thoroughly thankless and selfish folk, he was incessant in his complaints of the monstrous thanklessness and selfishness of others.

May received this letter of his two days after that wherein Gower's visit had been announced to her mother, and nearly a week before Fred and his friend were due at the vicarage. She could not help, as she read it, giving a sigh as she thought of her shabby bonnets and frocks, which Fred's appropriation of two quarters' allowance in succession had prevented her replacing. Not being by any means above a love of finery and a shame of shabbiness, she would have liked to look her best to this grand friend of Fred's. However, this was but a light trouble compared with that of poor Fred in debt and dunned, and without enough money even to get home. He could not help making friends, as he said, and he was so affectionate and generous that he could not help either returning their kindness at an expense which pinched and harassed him in this unhappy way. What was to be done? She hardly dare ask her father, who already had had to supplement again and again the very liberal allowance he had made to Fred, until his patience, and his purse also, were exhausted. May knew how much her

father had denied himself to make Fred the allowance he did; and how little was left to him to give up in order to satisfy these eternal demands for more. Poor Fred, she suspected, was thoughtless—a mere boy really—and had so little idea of the amount of his own expenditure and of his father's income, that he fancied his father was stinting him—instead of himself—unreasonably. But she, knowing how much the other way it was, could not bear the idea of asking her father for this twenty pounds, which he could not spare at all probably, certainly not without extreme inconvenience.

With these thoughts in her troubled mind, May decided to apply first to her mother, who was always pinching and scraping to make a privy purse of her own for Fred to draw upon. She found that good housewife in the best bedroom which she was having arranged already for Fred's distinguished friend.

"Mamma!" It is perhaps worth noting, as significant of the difference between the nature of May's regard and relation to her father and to her mother, that she called her always "Mamma," whereas she called him by the far friendlier, fuller, and more confidential title of "Father." "Mamma, have you got any money?" she asked in her direct way.

"Money!" exclaimed her mother, turning round to look her surprise.

"For Fred. He's worried so about money."

"You got your allowance last week, May, if you are so anxious to help him."

"It's all gone," May answered loyally, silent as to where it had gone. "But I thought that, perhaps, you might have enough to spare him; he wants it so. He hasn't enough, even, to bring him home."

"Do you mean that you've spent your whole quarter's allowance already?" cried her mother in incredulous surprise.

"Yes, it's all gone. But I'd pay you out of my next, if you could lend me some to send him."

"That's all nonsense, May. You know perfectly well that if I had it I should send it to him myself. But all I had I sent him last week. How you managed to spend—! You sent it to him!" she cried sharply, with a spasm of jealousy. She had almost rather that her idolised Fred should have lacked the money, than that he should have owed it to May.

"Yes," replied May simply. "But it

wasn't enough. He has been put lately to a great deal of expense which he couldn't avoid."

"I wish, May, you would be more straightforward. You as good as said you had sent him nothing," rejoined her mother petulantly. "Does he say he hasn't money to bring him home?"

"He wants more than that. I'm afraid he's a little in debt," May answered hesitatively, with a troubled face.

"Dear! He is thoughtless!" cried her mother, sitting down helplessly to think this over. After a little, she said with a sigh: "Well, you had better ask your father for it, as he has written to you;" alleging this reason, partly in pique at Fred's confiding his difficulties to May rather than herself, and partly through unwillingness to admit May's influence with her father to be greater than her own.

Having thus washed her hands of the affair, Mrs. Beresford dismissed May by rising and affecting instant absorption in her book.

May, with a heavy heart, proceeded to seek her father in the study.

"Well, my dear?" he said, looking up from his book with a welcoming smile. "Well, my dear, what is it now—the great surplice question, to button or not to button?"

But May did not return his smile.

"I had a letter from Fred to-day, father," she said, standing at one side of her father's chair, a little behind it, and resting her hand on his shoulder.

"Wanting money?" he asked quickly, with clouded brow.

"He has so many friends——" began May.

"You sent him your allowance!" her father interrupted her to say; for he knew she would not have come for money to him while she possessed a penny of her own.

"I didn't want it, father, really."

He remained silent for a little, while he put his arm round her to draw her close to his side.

"And it's not the first time you have sent it either, May. I suppose you have been wearing all sorts of shabby things, though I never noticed them; for I never get further than your face, dear," he said with a tenderness which made the speech inexpressibly deeper and dearer than a mere compliment. "I shall have to go back ten years and take you by the hand to the dressmaker's,

and trust you only with enough money to buy Con tobacco."

"You give me so much, father; so much more than I want, really; while Fred has all kinds of expenses which he cannot help."

"So that he cannot help robbing you!" he cried, with a sudden and unlooked for outburst of bitterness which he seemed to regret in the moment of uttering it; for he added, in a tone of extreme gentleness: "May, dear, I must ask you not to do this again."

"It isn't as you think, father," May pleaded earnestly. "He would not have taken it if I had wanted it. It was altogether my own doing."

"It's not only for you I am thinking, dear, but for him. It is no more kindness to him, than it would be to give a drunkard drink."

"I don't think it's extravagance, father; but he has to return the kindnesses he receives."

"He'll never ruin himself in that way," answered her father. "No, dear; it's extravagance, and extravagance of a bad kind. He has taken to gambling, May; and to give a gambler money is to feed a fever. I have said nothing to your mother about it, as it would only worry her to no purpose; but I should be glad if you would use your influence with him, dear. I have none, and he cannot treat your mother with common respect."

Here even May had nothing to say for Fred, who showed his mother more than even the usual amount of that contempt which is the acknowledgement a spoiled child makes to his worshippers.

As for the charge of gambling made against Fred, May could judge of its seriousness only from the seriousness of her father's manner. Plainly he thought it exceedingly grave.

"Did he ask you to ask me for money?" her father enquired after a short silence.

"He seemed in great need of it," she replied evasively. "He had not enough to bring him home."

"I can send him so much and no more. I would not send him more, even if I had it to spare; but I haven't, and he must know that I haven't. I can give you five pounds for him, May; and you may tell him from me that he must know why I cannot send him more—and find it hard to spare that," he said, with a significance which left May in no doubt that he had lately paid a large sum to, or for, Fred.

She removed her hand from her father's

shoulder to put her arm around his neck, while she stooped to press her cheek caressingly against his.

"Dear old father!" she said with an emotion out of proportion to its apparent cause.

"I am greatly to be pitied!" he answered in a tone and with a caress which expressed how much she was to him.

On her way to her room to answer Fred's letter, May was intercepted—casually it seemed—by her mother, who said with ill-concealed impatience and anxiety, "Well?"

"Father has given me five pounds for him."

"Was that all he wanted?"

"He wanted a little more, but father couldn't spare it."

Her mother was turning away with a troubled face when it occurred to her to ask, "Did you tell your father you had sent him your allowance?"

"Yes; he asked me."

"You were very ready to tell him," rejoined her mother.

"I only told him as I told you, when he asked me, mamma," May answered indignantly; but her mother had already turned away.

Mrs. Beresford, if not otherwise, was naturally an amiable woman; but the milk of human kindness was soured in her by jealousy, whenever that passion came into play.

May was really angry at the charge of currying favour with her father at Fred's expense, and it was some minutes before she had so far recovered her usual sweet composure, as to be able to sit down and write her letter.

"DEAREST FRED,—I am so sorry to be able to send you only five pounds; but father cannot spare more, and he bids me say that you will yourself understand why he has so little to spare. He never says anything about it; but I know that he is very poor at present from the way he denies himself everything; and he seems at times so much worried and in such low spirits. I do feel so sorry for him, and so would you, Fred dear, if you were at home and saw how troubled he seems to be sometimes. I have no doubt at all that want of money has a great deal to do with it. I know how generous you are, dear Fred, and how you cannot bear to receive kindnesses from all your many friends without returning them; but I know, too, that if you had an idea how pinched and

harassed for money father has been lately, you would think more of him than even of your friends.

"Dear old Fred, don't be cross with me and say I am always preaching, because I tell you only what you would see and feel for yourself if you were here. Being out of sight and at a distance makes such a difference; but if you were at home and saw how changed father is of late, and knew how much want of money had to do with it, I feel sure that you would deny yourself, and even your friends, to make things easier for him.

"I am afraid you will think this a dismal answer to a letter with the good news of your coming home in it; but you know how glad I am, and how I just long to see you again, dear old Fred, even if you come only to scold me! Ever, dearest Fred, your loving sister, MAY."

On reading her letter over, May was not satisfied with it at all. Nevertheless, she could think of no gentler way of expressing what her father had suggested—and her own heart approved—that she should say to her thoughtless brother.

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

FEBRUARY.

THIS month derives its name from the *Februa*, or *Ferialia*, sacrifices offered to the Manes of the gods at this season. Until the time of Numa Pompilius it was the last month of the year, but he placed it second, and dedicated it to Neptune, the god of water, a not inappropriate deity. According to Ovid's "*Fasti*,"

In ancient times purgations had the name
Of *Februa*; various customs prove the same.
In short, with whatsoever our hearts we hold
Are purified, was *Februa* termed of old;
Lustrations are from hence, from hence the name
Of this our month of February came.

The Saxons termed February "*Sprout Kele*," from the sprouting of cabbages during the month, and "*Sol Monath*" (pancake month) from the cakes offered to the sun at this time. *Sol*, or *soul*, signified food or cakes. The Zodiacal sign of the month is *Pisces*, or The Fishes, thus referred to by Spenser:

Then came cold February, sitting
In an old wagon, for he could not ride—
Drawn by two fishes, for the season fitting;
Which through the flood before did softly slide.

The month proved in the past a fruitful source of inspiration of the rhymes of weather prophets. A thoroughly wet Feb-

ruary was hailed as the welcome forerunner of a fine summer; so that an abundance of snow or rain was not only expected but anxiously desired during this month:

If February give much snow,
A fine summer it doth foreshow.

February fill dyke, be it black or be it white;
But if it be white it's better to like.

A similar spirit inspires the proverb which says: "When gnats dance in February the husbandman becomes a beggar." The Scotch also say that "For every song the mavis sings in February she'll lament ere spring be over."

February has seven unlucky days, namely, the sixth, seventh, tenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, and twenty-eighth, spread pretty freely over the twenty-eight days allotted to it. These may, however, be warded off in a measure by wearing an amethyst, which is a prescriptive against violent passions and drunkenness.

Candlemas Day, or the Purification of the Blessed Virgin (February second) stands as a holy-day in the Church of England Calendar, and is observed in all Catholic countries with great pomp. Its observance dates from a very early period in the Christian era, and probably was one of the fast days of the Pagans. In very early days the snowdrop was called the "Purification Flower," or "The Faire Maid of February," because it is generally in bloom at this season of the year. Candlemas is said to derive its name from the circumstance that, before mass was said on that day, the Church blessed the candles for the whole year, and a procession was afterwards formed, in which the faithful carried candles. It is to be noted that, from Candlemas, the use of tapers at Vespers and Litanies, which prevailed throughout the winter, ceased, until the evening of All Hallowmass.

There was formerly an almost universal belief that if Candlemas Day were sunshiny, hard weather would follow; if cloudy, a mild season would ensue:

If Candlemas Day be fine and clear
There will be two winters in one year.

This was not a very prophetic prophecy to make, seeing that, as the year commenced with winter, so it likewise ended with the same seasonable weather. But the poem went on to say:

But if Candlemas Day bring clouds and rain,
Winter is gone, and will not come again.

A further couplet told our forefathers, as it also tells us, that,

When the wind's in the east on Candlemas Day,
There it will stick to the second of May.

Candlemas Eve is the proper time for the removal of all evergreen decorations from churches and houses; forcible reasons for which are given by Herrick, to whom we are indebted for an acquaintance with many of the old and curious customs which prevailed with our forefathers.

Down with the rosemary, and so,
Down with the bays and mistletoe;
Down with the holly, ivy, all
Wherewith ye dressed the Christmas hall;
That so the superstitious find
Not one least branch be left behind—
For look, how many leaves there be
Neglected there, maids, trust to me,
So many goblins see shall yee.

In Scotland, on Candlemas Day, a custom known as Briids bed was practised. The mistress and servants of each family took a sheaf of oats and dressed it up in woman's apparel, put it in a large basket, and laid a wooden club by its side. The whole of them then cried "Briid is come! Briid is come! Briid is well come!" When they rose the next morning, they looked among the ashes on the hearth, expecting to see there the impression of Briid's club, which, if found, was considered the precursor of a good crop and a generally prosperous year. If there was no mark, it was an ill omen.

Another Scotch custom was known as "Candlemas Ball," peculiar to the Highlands. The meaning of the term is lost; but on Candlemas morning people saluted each other with "mu nase choil oust"—my Candlemas bond upon you. Whoever succeeded in first using these words, was entitled to a gift from the person saluted.

The next day, February the third, is the festal day of Saint Blaise, the patron of wool combers and wool staplers. This saint was a Bishop of Sebaste, in Armenia, and suffered martyrdom in 316, for which he was canonised. Formerly at centres of the woollen industries, there were Bishop Blaise processions.

February the fifth is the day of Saint Agatha, who occupies a place in both calendars. Very little is known of Saint Agatha; and her day, for many generations, has not been observed in England, though formerly it was observed as a rigid fast day. She is the patron saint of Catalonia, and by the people of that country it is supposed that her veil, which is preserved as a most sacred relic, is a good defence against the eruptions of Mount Etna. According to a legend, the lava running down the mountain, A.D. 252, the year

after Saint Agatha's martyrdom, turned aside at her tomb. In the terrible eruption of 1669, when the burning lava was pouring down in torrents to the sea, this sacred veil was carried in procession, and presented to the fiery flood, which thereupon retired and spared the city. The fact that in 1693 the church was buried under the lava, and twenty thousand people perished, does not appear to have destroyed belief in the virtues of the miraculous veil, which would doubtless have saved the city if it could, so that the fault must not be attributed to it alone.

Collop Monday has long since ceased to have any special signification; and it takes its name from the fact that on it our forefathers were in the habit of cutting their meat into strips or collops, that it might be kept in salt until the season of Lent had passed. In some parts of England a trace of the custom is found in the eating of collops of bacon on this day. Collop Monday is the day immediately preceding Shrove Tuesday. In Yorkshire and Lancashire, the children go from door to door with the demand, "gie's a collop or a penny," evidently a corruption of the ancient petition:

To-day is Collop Monday,
Gie's a collop and let us away.

February the fourteenth is this year a double festival—Shrove Tuesday and Saint Valentine's Day. Each of these feasts has already been given.* It is, therefore, not necessary now to say much about either.

Shrove Tuesday is the first moveable feast of the year, and has for centuries been a solemn fast of the Roman Catholic and English Churches, preparatory to the religious rites of the ensuing forty days. Many superstitious practices have associated themselves with this day.

The custom of cock-fighting and cock-throwing practised on this day was most barbarous. In the latter case the unfortunate bird was tied to a stake, and sticks and stones were freely hurled at it until death put an end to its sufferings, the bird being regarded as an emblem of impiety.

In an old broadsheet preserved in the British Museum, and dating from the year 1660, Shrovetide is depicted as a puff-paunched monster, mounted upon a fat

ox bedecked with good cheer, and thus addressed Lent:

Thou say'st thou'll ease the cookes, the cookes could
wish
Thee boy'l'd, or broyl'd with all thy froathy fish,
For one fish dinner takes more paines and cost,
Than three of flesh, bak'd, roast, or boy'l'd, almost.

A curious old custom prevails among the quarrymen of the Isle of Purbeck, on this day, generally observed at Corfe Castle. There is among the quarrymen a charter, bearing the date of 1551, which is rigorously obeyed, in order to keep the working of the stone quarries in the Isle of Purbeck in the hands of the freemen. To be able to take up one's freedom, it is necessary to be the legitimate son of a freeman. He must be twenty-one years of age, up to which time his wages belong to his parents. Once during each year the quarrymen meet at Corfe Castle Town Hall, and there read the charter, and on this occasion, namely, Shrove Tuesday, "Free boys" claim and take up their "freedom." Each man has to sign the roll of freemen, pay a fee of six shillings and eightpence, provide a penny loaf, made on purpose by the baker of the place, and to buy a pot of beer. The man thus sworn in becomes his own master. Should any of the freemen desire to marry during the next year he has to pay the stewards a "marriage shilling," and should he neglect to do this his wife after his death loses all interest in the quarry and cannot take an apprentice to work for her. After the above business is transacted the ceremony of "kicking the ball" is commenced. The ball is provided by the man who was last married among the freemen, and is presented in lieu of the "marriage shilling." If it should happen that no freeman has married since the previous Shrove Tuesday, an old football is used. The ball is taken from the Town Hall to a field at Corfe Castle, and there kicked about by any one who wishes. These proceedings are terminated by the ball, and a pound of pepper being taken to the lord of the manor as an acknowledgement to him in respect of the right of way to the River Ower.

A few words as to the origin of Saint Valentine's Day. The saint who gives it its name was Bishop of Rome, and was martyred in the third century for his adhesion to the doctrines of Christianity. In his "Illustrations to Shakespeare," Mr. Douce says: "It was the practice in ancient Rome, during the great part of the month of February, to celebrate the Lupercalia,

* Shrove Tuesday, "Household Words," April the tenth, 1866, and Saint Valentine's Day, "All the Year Round," February the twelfth, 1887.

which were feasts in honour of Pan and Juno, whence the latter deity was named Februala, Februalis, and Februlla. On this occasion, amidst a variety of ceremonies, the names of young women were put into a box, from which they were drawn by the men as chance directed. The pastors of the early Christian Church, by every possible means, endeavoured to eradicate the vestiges of Pagan superstitions, and chiefly by some commutations of their forms, substituted, in the present instance, the names of particular saints instead of those of women; and as the festivals of the Lupercalia had commenced about the middle of February, they appear to have chosen Saint Valentine's Day for celebrating the new feast, because it occurred nearly at the same time. This is, in part, the opinion of a learned and rational compiler of the 'Lives of the Saints,' the Rev. Alban Butler. It would seem, however, that it was utterly impossible to extirpate altogether any ceremony to which the common people had been much accustomed—a fact which it were easy to prove by tracing the origin of various other popular superstitions. And, accordingly, the outline of the ancient ceremonies was preserved, but modified by some adaptation to the Christian system. It is reasonable to suppose that the above practice of choosing mates would gradually become reciprocal in the sexes, and that all persons so chosen would be called 'Valentine's,' from the day on which the ceremony took place."

Ash Wednesday, or the "Head of the Fast," which this year falls on February the fifteenth, derives its name from the fact that on this day the priests in the Romish Church blessed the ashes which were made of the branches of the palms consecrated the previous year, and put them on the heads of the people.

Ash Wednesday marks the commencement of the great and primitive fast of forty days, instituted by Noah, as an eternal benison to future ages of the providence of God in the preservation of the world. After our Saviour's resurrection this institution was very happily blended with the more glorious event, by His disciples. For centuries it was regarded as so solemn a season that theatres were—until quite recently—closed for the day; and the House of Commons shortened its sittings when in session.

It is said that Pope Felix the Third, in 487, first added the four days preceding

the old Lent Sunday to raise the number of fasting days to forty; and that Pope Gregory, in 590, introduced the sprinkling of ashes on the first of these four additional days, hence the term "dies cinerum," or Ash Wednesday. The custom of sprinkling the ashes was abolished at the Reformation, as being a mere shadow or vain show.

To whatever part of the world we turn our attention—that is to say, the civilised world—we find traces of customs peculiar to this solemn season, and in all cases accompanied with more or less fasting. From the days of Noah, right down to the present day, forty days, at one season or another, have been set apart for the purpose of solemn prayer and supplication. In England, the customs connected with Lent have been many and varied, especially before the Reformation. Both Catholics and Protestants—more especially the former—have regarded it as a period for fasting and special religious services; indeed, in this respect, it is very doubtful if ever Lent was more seriously observed than in our own time. In mediæval times they were, no doubt, stricter in the matter of fish and the rejection of flesh; but to the majority, as to the wife of Bath, the penitential season must have called up quite other thoughts than those of self-mortification.

During the season of Lent an officer, denominated the King's Cock Crower, formerly crowed the hour every night within the precincts of the Royal residence, instead of, as on other occasions, proclaiming it in the ordinary manner. The duties were abolished on the accession of George the First to the throne; but not the office and salary, which were continued until the time of George the Fourth.

Other Lent customs are dealt with under various heads; but the names of the various Sundays during the season may be here enumerated as:

Tid, mid, and misera,
Carling, Palm, Fasse Egg day.

The meanings of the first three days are hopelessly lost, though probably connected with obsolete services for the days. The others are dealt with under separate heads.

February the twenty-fourth is Saint Matthias's Day, a festival of the Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches. It is also the first ember day of the year. The twenty-second and twenty-eighth are likewise Ember days.

This year being Leap Year, February has

twenty-nine days. In the time of Julius Cæsar, the Solar year was fixed at three hundred and sixty-five days, six hours, which was supposed to comprise the period from one vernal equinox to another. The six hours were reckoned once every four years, when an extra day was added to the year. The extra day was placed a day before the twenty-fourth of February—the sixth of the calends—which was reckoned twice; hence the term, "bissexile," or twice sixth. By this arrangement the year is three minutes longer than the astronomical year. This, however, is corrected by a very simple plan: All years whose index number is divisible by four, are Leap Years, unless (a) their index number is divisible by one hundred century years. In this case they are not Leap Years, unless (b) their index number is divisible by four hundred. Thus, 1900 and 2100 are not Leap Years, while 2000 and 2400 are. In the countries where the Greek Church holds sway, the Julian Calendar is in force, and every fourth year is regarded as a Leap Year. Russia and Greece will count 1900 as a Leap Year; and after February, 1900, the difference of twelve days now existing between the Julian and Gregorian Calendars will be increased to thirteen days.

A PARISIAN BOARDING HOUSE.

OUR pension was, of course, no mere ordinary pension—what woman ever yet acknowledged that anything that was hers was ordinary?—and very proud we all were of, what we considered, its unique position.

Parisian boarding-houses are, as a rule, hot-beds of laziness and gossip; but, from our establishment, frivolous conversation was banished, and a serious occupation in life was a necessity for obtaining a footing amongst us. There was one question that our Lady Principal never failed to address to new comers: "To what do you intend to devote your time whilst in Paris?" and woe be to the unhappy individual who had the courage to acknowledge that her bent was pleasure. A rod of iron seemed, by some mysterious power, to glide down the backbone of our chief; the smile vanished from her lips; the dulcet tones from her voice, as she explained that her establishment was for the bees, not the butterflies, of life. "There are in Paris," she would remark, with a

condescending wave of the hand, "pensions where pleasure-seekers will no doubt be welcome; but it is my privilege, the object to which I devote my life, to make a 'home'—this word she always gave in English, and by a subtle intonation, she contrived to show how well she knew all that it implied—"for ladies having serious occupations necessitating their presence in the French capital."

At the end of this discourse, the frivolous worldling was gently led to the door.

Thus we, the fortunate twenty, who were admitted into Madame's Home, stood dignified—or branded, as you will—by the title of "women with occupations."

Perhaps it was the knowledge of this that gave to most of us that air of depression which was one of our distinguishing characteristics. I could, I remember, scarcely repress a shudder, when I first glanced down the long, narrow, dining-table; there was such an utter absence of simple, wholesome, human joy in the faces of the women who were sitting around it. Young, old, middle-aged, all were there; all women of means—you don't find the comforts of a home in Paris for a trifle—most of them women of refinement and culture; but how strangely desolate and sad they seemed! How rarely one heard a laugh, or a light-hearted jest within those walls! What can induce such women to leave their own land? A man may stand the test of isolation; but a woman, separated from her kith and kin, seems to lose half the charm of womanhood.

We lived in one of those great white houses which have sprung up like mushrooms around the Arc de Triomphe, the sort of house an advertisement describes as replete with every modern convenience. And so it was: we had bath-rooms and lifts; the grand saloon was a perfect model of artistic beauty; whilst our little private dens, in which we were supposed to work during the day, were quite charming. The dinners, too, were luxurious, and every effort was made to render easy the lives of the ladies with occupations.

From eight a.m. to seven p.m. if we were indoors, it was by courtesy taken for granted that we were hard at work: after that we might relax from our pursuits without exciting remark. Thus the evening was our only time for becoming acquainted with our fellow-workers.

From the first day I was in the home the people that most excited my interest were an American lady and her son and

daughter. An ill-sorted, incongruous party one might have been tempted to say, if their tenderness for each other had been less apparent. As it was, no matter which was speaking—mother, son, or daughter—he or she seemed instinctively to glance at the two others for sympathy.

The mother, Mrs. Meredith—a dainty little lady of about fifty—must, in her youth, have been singularly lovely; even when I knew her, I considered her one of the most attractive women I had ever met. She was always dressed to perfection, and in the latest fashion: her gloves and shoes were marvels of beauty, and I have seen her positively shudder as she glanced at the careless attire of her daughter. We all—from the eldest to the youngest—were her devoted slaves; but she accepted our homage as an absolute matter of course. Evidently from her cradle she had been accustomed to the incense of adorers.

The most humble of her worshippers was her own son, a great, burly professor, with kindly eyes, an honest face, and a shy, awkward manner; he always seemed to be too intent upon knowing what was passing under the earth to trouble himself about those who lived on its surface—always excepting his mother and sister, whose slightest movement he watched with wondering admiration. It was one of the prettiest sights in the world to see his rugged face soften, and the dull, abstract expression of his eyes melt with tenderness, when either of these ladies entered the room—the whole man seemed to be transformed. Evidently he had come abroad simply to act as his mother's escort—it was in this capacity he had been admitted into our feminine establishment—and in sooth his office was no sinecure. From early morning to late at night he must dance attendance from *Le Bon Marché* to the *Louvre*; the *Bois* to the *Opera*; for, in spite of her fifty years, Mrs. Meredith's taste for gaiety was insatiable.

When the weather was fine, her son accompanied her without a murmur; but when winter set in, and east winds were blowing, and snow was falling, both he and his sister struggled hard to keep the volatile little lady within doors. Though she was fragile as a flower, this was no easy task; and it was often difficult to repress a smile at the novel spectacle of a mother almost reduced to tears, because her hard-hearted children would not let her go to some scene of dissipation. They were very

sweet and gentle with her; and, unless the danger was really great, Mrs. Meredith generally, in the end, carried her point. But I have seen her daughter fix her great mournful eyes upon her with a look of unutterable perplexity, as if her mother were some wonderful bird or flower, which she loved and tended, but strove vainly to understand.

Dr. Meredith's love for his mother seemed only to be surpassed by his devotion to his sister, Mrs. Shilleto. When he spoke to her there was always a touch of reverential awe, mingled with the tenderness of his manner. Evidently she was, for him, a being apart, far removed from all petty human frailties and cares. I think we all, though we knew not why, in a more or less degree, shared Dr. Meredith's feeling. Although I could chatter with an easy mind the veriest nonsense—as my pursuit was art, my frivolity was pardoned—to Mrs. Meredith, my words died on my lips, and I stammered like a school-girl if her daughter drew near. It was not that Mrs. Shilleto was hard or stern, far from it; the gentle courtesy of her manner was exquisite; and no one could look into her face and doubt the sweetness of her nature. Still, there must have been an indefinable something in her that froze up the font of human intercourse; for, as I soon observed, I was not the only one who suffered when she was near. But if we all instinctively shrank away when she approached, it was not with repugnance, but rather with awe, as if we knew we were in the presence of one upon whom some great affliction had fallen.

The only thing she seemed to care for was music; and whilst her mother was wandering off in search of amusement, she would pass whole days at the piano. She was a tall, slight woman, about five-and-twenty, with delicate features, and a clear white skin which looked as if, in some far-back age, it had been tinged with rose. Her hair, which must have been of that light fluff, golden sort which stands around a face like a halo, was, when I knew her, perfectly white, not a touch of colour in it, not even a streak of grey. Her eyes, large and beautifully-formed though they were, had the dull, absent look you find in the eyes of the blind. Even when she was speaking their expression never varied; it was as if the nerves that should unite them with the brain had been snapped asunder. There was something painfully weird in this

youthful, elegant form and lovely face, contrasting with snow-white hair, and dull, dead eyes. The remembrance of it haunted me day and night; so that it was with almost a sense of relief I heard that the doctors had ordered her to the South.

The most casual observer could not doubt but that her life had been a tragic one; but it was years before I knew what had blanched her hair and driven life and hope from her face.

Whilst in Switzerland, on her honeymoon, she and her husband one day set out together for a walk. Seven hours later, Mrs. Shilleto rushed into the hotel alone, wild, nay mad, with grief and terror. Her husband was found the next day at the bottom of a deep ravine, dead, and mangled almost beyond recognition. What had really happened was never known, for Mrs. Shilleto was raving mad for months; and even when, six years later she was calm and sane, none dared to question her concerning that fearful day.

The Russian Countess Olga, with her strange, wild animal nature, interested me scarcely less keenly than Mrs. Shilleto. Her mother, the widow of some distinguished general, finding little time in the midst of Court gaieties to think of a daughter whom the doctors had pronounced too delicate to live in St. Petersburg, had sent her down to a large estate she owned on the Polish border, and then, for some years, had forgotten her existence. Doubtless, at the same time, she sent teachers and governors to fit the little Countess to play her part later in the great world; but these must either have failed in their duty or found their task an impossible one, for, when the Countess Olga was summoned home that her education might receive its finishing touches, and that she might be presented to the world, and married to the man her mother had selected, she spread woe and dismay in the family circle. She had been brought up surrounded by semi-barbarians, peasants, and serfs, and seemed to have found in her own nature more affinity with them than with the species of man with whom she was brought into contact in her mother's house.

The gentle, docile invalid her family had been prepared to welcome had developed into a fierce, aggressive reformer, with a keen sense of her own wrongs and of the wrongs of the people amongst whom she had lived, and with a firm determination to avenge them.

Her mother and brothers, shocked and

startled by her wild words and ways, sent her to a fashionable educational establishment, where they hoped that, surrounded by companions of her own age and position, she would acquire at least the outward forms of civilisation. But the well-born Western girls shrank with equal repugnance from Olga's caresses as from her violence, and, disliking her from the first, they employed all the arts of their smaller, meaner natures to render her life unbearable.

After one or two scenes of unparalleled violence, the Principal was forced, for the sake of peace, to resign the honour of having a Russian Countess under her care, and poor Olga was sent away.

The experiment was repeated again and again, always with the same result; until the girl was about twenty, when, accompanied by a sort of keeper, she joined our establishment. By this time she had become comparatively tamed; she had developed a decided talent for music, and great hopes were entertained as to the soothing effects this might have upon her. I think we were all rather afraid of her, and certainly her appearance was not calculated to arouse any gentler sentiment. Five feet ten, at least, in height, she had the figure and walk which one is more prepared to find in a guardsman than a young lady. She had a well-formed nose, low, straight brow, and a firm jaw, which, much too square and heavy for feminine beauty, was indicative of an iron will. Her eyes were small and deeply set; her complexion perfectly colourless, nay, sometimes almost blue from intensity of its pallor: in a word, she, the descendant of one of the most ancient families in Europe, would have been a god-send to any artist seeking a model of the Nihilist type. Less carefully watched, she would have joined one of those secret societies, for which she never disguised her sympathy. Nor would she have been a drone in their hive; unless her face belied her, she would have proved an invaluable instrument in the hands of an unscrupulous, or reckless leader.

Having made one or two slight attempts to gain the good-will of a pretty English girl, who had not a thought, or an idea in her head, and having met with no response, the Countess Olga stood completely aloof in our little social gatherings. She would sit for the hour together knitting her brows, and frowning down upon us, in a way that was rather trying to the nerves of our

weaker sisters ; but, beyond that, and an occasional dangerous glance, she did no harm. As I watched her moving about amongst us, with our little gilded chairs and tables, and bits of useless fancy-work, she seemed to me as a being from another sphere, perhaps not a higher, but one at least where airs and graces are unknown, and where men and women speak and act as their natures prompt. Surely it is from such as she that Zola and his school take their type of womanhood. "Bête fauve," I once heard a dainty Parisian call her, and I was struck by the fitness of the title. Yes, she had all the fierce passion of the animal race, its wild, uncontrollable impulse, its instinctive loves and hates ; but she had, too, a boundless fund of self-sacrificing devotion, if ever she met with one worthy to call it into play. I always think of her as one of those great lions that, in narrow cages, wear out their lives with restless pacing. It seems a hard fate that condemns her, with her strong freedom-loving nature, to the conventional fetters of her class.

Miss Maria Blake was another of the inmates who attracted no small amount of attention in our little "réunions." She was an American, who had come to Paris to study art. Some one having once told her that she resembled Rosa Bonheur, it became, from that moment, one of the great objects of her life to accentuate the resemblance : straightway her hair was cut short, the semi-masculine attire of her model was adopted, and all the little mannerisms and eccentricities of the great animal painter were faithfully reproduced. Still, in spite of all her affectation and folly, Maria Blake was a large-hearted generous woman, always ready, with kindly word and helping hand, to come to the aid of those in need ; and when her great picture was hung on the walls of the Salon, we all rejoiced as heartily as if her triumph were our own.

Her fellow-countrywoman, Frederica, or Donna Quixote as we named her, was scarcely less popular ; rich, handsome, twenty-three years old, with perfect health, and a never-failing flow of good spirits, if ever a mortal were content, surely it should have been she. But, far from this being the case, her whole life was spent in a vain endeavour to rectify the workings of fortune, at least in so far as they affected her sex. She had come to Paris for the purpose of studying the position of women with regard to the criminal

code : she had tried London first, but had deserted that city in disgust at, what she styled, "the slavery-loving nature of the women." What she was trying to bring about I could never quite discover, though she would talk for the hour together of her mission, which, in some mysterious way, was to lead to the regeneration of feminine humanity. She certainly worked harder than any mill-hand in the kingdom.

Our third American belonged to a very different class. She hailed from the Far West, where her father had just struck oil, or some other commodity equally dollar-producing. Though ignorant of the simplest elements of learning, she was well versed in the science of life. When she was seven years old her mother died, and from that moment she seemed to have taken full command of her father's household, store, children, and all ; and in the course of her career as general manager, she had accumulated a vast fund of wise maxims on men and manners, which she gave forth at all times and seasons. She looked about thirty when she came to Paris, but was probably younger, though there were no traces of youth or good looks in her honest, resolute face. "I kalkilate t'will take me two years," she said to me one day, "to learn all ye know, and then I'll make me way back to th' old man and t'bairns, and we'll tak our place wi' th' best o' 'em." And, if industry and determination go for anything, she must have achieved her object before this ; for she worked from early morning to late at night, whilst professors and teachers vied with "coiffeurs" and "modistes," in fitting the American heiress to play her part in fashionable society.

She looked very weary sometimes, but she struggled on. "When I've gotten edication," she used to say, "I can help t'bairns. I should like t'bairns to start fair." "T'bairns" were her brothers and sisters.

Then there was a beautiful girl who had been sent out of the way, lest she should interfere with the matrimonial prospects of her plain-looking elder sister.

Another, a silly, golden-haired beauty, who was supposed to be studying French literature, whilst the divorce court was deciding the fate of her equally silly, golden-haired mother.

Three languid, colourless girls, who were waiting for the return of their parents from India.

These, and many another, pass through my mind as I think of that tall, bare house,

with its long, monotonous row of great staring windows, under the shade of the Arc de Triomphe.

But two figures stand out more clearly than the rest: the Fauns we used to call them. They were only children—a boy of fourteen, and a girl a year younger; but beautiful and bright, beaming with life and happiness. It was a pleasure to look at them; they were such perfect emblems of the sweetness of youth. They were never cross or troublesome, as other children are; the smile never left their lips, a cloud was never seen on their brows. We were all very proud of such model children, for they made no noise and were never in the way; but an old philosopher, who had passed his life studying his kind, chanced one evening to dine in the house. I saw him looking at the boy with evident interest. I asked him why. Instead of replying to my question he inquired if I had read "Transformation." The book happened to be fresh in my mind, as I had come across it only a few days before. I said so.

"Then don't you see the likeness?" he asked, pointing to the boy. "He is Donatello, the Faun, minus, of course, the ears."

The old man was right. As a revelation it darted through my mind that I had never seen those children shed a tear or show one touch of human feeling. Smiling as sweetly on the latest comer as on their own father, natural affection, moral responsibility was, as their after-life proved, for them a dead letter: they were Fauns.

THE HERBALIST.

WHO knows much about the herbalist, except as an irregular practitioner of the art of healing—irregular, that is, inasmuch as he holds no degree or diploma, and yet often a skilful man in his way, who has acquired the trust and confidence of the country-side, and whose fame has travelled far and wide in a noiseless, subterranean fashion? There is a deep-seated, hereditary faith among simple country folk, which turns towards the herb-doctor as the presumed repository of the healing gifts of Nature—especially if the herb-doctor be some wise man who has inherited the lore of his forefathers; or, if the doctor be an old woman, the faith is perhaps still the greater, as holding to some possible connection with more potent charms.

In towns, too, and in great cities, even in the Metropolis itself, the herb-doctor lives and thrives; but here heshades off insensibly into the advertising owner of pills and nostrums, although there is no lack of veritable herbalists dealing in all kinds of medicinal herbs, and giving such advice as they may without incurring the penalties of the Medical Acts.

A certain charm still clings to the ancient lore of herbs and simples—a lore which retains a leaven of ancient rites and fond beliefs, with pleasing superstitions that still linger in the shady places of the world. "Physic without Astrology being a lamp without oyl," according to an ancient herbalist, it may be expected that those who are wise in herb-lore should also know something about ruling the stars.

With these feelings, it was a real delight to come across a quite modern pamphlet, "The Family Domestic Herbalist," published in the present decade, where the following information is given, in all good faith, respecting the useful herb Wormwood. "It cleanseth the body of choler (who dare say Mars doth no good?)." The allusion here is, of course, to the theory that the various herbs of the earth are all governed by the planets of the celestial world. Nor does it detract much from the charm of the thing to find that the passage is taken straight from the "English Physician Enlarged," of Nicholas Culpeper, published in 1653. The original author, indeed, has a great deal more to say about this particular herb—whole pages of rhodomontade, as it seems to us, about Mars and Saturn, with Venus and the rest; but, then, we are not "illuminati," and there is an esoteric meaning, if we may believe our author, in all this skimble-skamble: "He that reads this and understandeth what he reads, he hath a jewel more worth than a diamond. There lies a key in these words. . . . I have delivered it so plainly as I durst . . . this shall live when I am dead . . . wisdom is justified of her children—and so much for Wormwood."

There is a morsel of fulfilled prophecy here that attracts attention—of prophecy like Shakespeare's. "Not marble nor the gilded monuments of princes shall outlive these powerful rhymes." And although there are few to peruse the treatises of Culpeper at the present day, yet they still live in the popular handbooks of the herbalists, which, for the most part, like the one just alluded to, are only Culpeper

abridged. In our "Family Herbalist" all the astrological allusions are cut out, except in the above article on Wormwood. To one acquainted with the original text this exception seems significant. Might it be read as an intimation that the author or adapter of the new handbook believed himself to be the possessor of the jewel worth more than a diamond—the key to the dark sayings of the astrologer? Anyhow, it would be worth a little trouble to find out some one who had still a genuine belief in planetary influence.

The result of the search is, perhaps, a little disappointing. There is a certain picturesque element indeed about the herbalist's shop, placed in the narrowest part of what was once a main coaching road out of London. The low, steep-roofed houses, the multitude of taverns, the narrow muddy road, the high causeway—not high enough to save the foot passengers from being splashed by the wheels of the High-flyer coach, or of the dashing chaise-and-four—all these show but a gradual change and decay. In a corner which might easily be passed without notice, is the narrow bow-window of a shop where packets of herbs are displayed, with labels or bills of simple remedies, lozenges for winter coughs, balsams, salves, and ointments for all the ills that flesh is heir to. Everything about the place is neat and tidy: the brass plate on the door shines with peculiar lustre; a baize-covered inner door noiselessly swings back, and admits to a neat old-fashioned room, neither shop, nor office, nor study, and yet having a look of any of these. Here is a desk, a chair, an old bureau covered with books and pamphlets, a few cases filled with the various articles that are advertised in the windows, the herb-chest, neatly filled with packets of all kinds of herbs.

In the sunshine that filters through the herbs and balsams in the window, sits the herbalist reading the "Daily Telegraph," an elderly man with a rosy clear complexion, which is itself a reasonably good testimonial to the wares he deals in. But then he is altogether too reasonable and unenthusiastic to represent the typical herbalist. Certainly, he speaks of the allopathists with mild contempt, and has no good word for the Colleges, whether of Surgeons or Physicians, and in this last respect he resembles his famous predecessor, Culpeper, who, no matter what topic he was discussing, could never refrain from a fling at the "monopolizing upstart London Colledges." But he is not one to roam about the fields

gathering herbs and flowers, observing the planetary hour, and the planet that rules the particular plant. No, when he renews his stock of herbs, he takes the train to Farringdon Street, and buys them off the wholesale dealer—for there are wholesale herbalists who have herb gardeners and collectors in their pay, and who dry and preserve the herbs, and sell them made up in neat packets to all the herbalists and herb-doctors in the country. And about Farringdon Street these dealers are chiefly to be found, along with the great advertising vendors of patent medicines and specifics.

This neighbourhood was always noted for astrologers and herb-doctors; the cunning men of Cow Lane, mentioned by Ben Jonson; those who cast nativities and predicted the future in addition to prescribing pills and potions for such as sought them out and paid them well for their mystic labours. But with such charlatans our herbalist has no connection by descent or otherwise—his astronomical views are those of the day; and, as for the allusion to Mars in the "Family Herbalist," well, the work is no doubt a reprint of a popular manual which had its origin a couple of centuries ago, and in which the God of War was an accidental survivor.

And yet, notwithstanding such disclaimers, it is pretty clear that the herbalist of to-day is connected by well-defined links with the astrological, fantastical enthusiast of other days.

It is quite possible that the College of Physicians, with all its prestige and influence, may have something to learn from the humble herbalist. Certainly some progress has been made since the solemn practitioners of old—with their powdered wigs and gold-headed canes—prescribed powdered mummy and the fat of those who had suffered on the gallows, and drew all their notions from old-world treatises of Galen or Hippocrates. The Pharmacopœia has been enlarged indeed by the discovery of new regions with their vegetable products. We owe quinine to the Jesuits, and sundry other useful remedies to botanists and explorers—but what do we owe to the physicians themselves? And the wisest physician is often compelled to own the superior efficacy of old women's remedies in simple cases over his own more elaborate prescriptions. And apart from those personal remedies with which our physicians—as blindly groping, perhaps, as their predecessors—

attack the diseases of the day, is there no virtue in our old English herbs? And were these old quacks who loved and studied them—who “made juleps, and syrups, and decoctions, ointments, plaisters, and pulvises, with troches, loches, pills, and powders,” all from the produce of their old-fashioned herb gardens—were all their remedies but foolishness and imposture?

That a good deal of the old popular medical art still survives—although in an imperfect and fragmentary state—is evidenced by the constant demand for the packets of herbs which are the chief stock-in-trade of our herbalist.

There is a printed list of these which contains the names of many common and a few rare English herbs, the appearance and properties of which were familiar to our great grandmothers, but which few but the professional herb-gatherer would now recognise. There are Agrimony, Balm, and Burdock—those pleasant English names! far sweeter on the tongue than those horrible Latin combinations—Camomile and Celandine; Clivers—the fame of which for eruptions on the face is still high, and which Culpeper styles “Cleavers or Goose Grass,” and of which he says, “it is familiarly taken in broth, to keep them lean and lank that are apt to grow fat.”

Then we have Comfrey and Coltsfoot, with Cranesbill and Dandelion, the curative properties of which are known in every language and clime. Then there is Featherfew, a herb under the rule of the planet Venus, and of quite marvellous capacities in various emergencies; nor is Darnel wanting, nor rank Fumitory, with Ground Ivy, and Carduus Benedictus or Holy Thistle. Horehound, still in high credit for throat and lungs; Marsh Mallow and Meadowsweet, with Mugwort, Nettles, and Pellitory. Pennyroyal is another well-known herb; and Rosemary, better known by reputation than to actual experience. Then there is Rue again—the chosen partner of the last—a famous popular antiseptic; and there is Sage, which suggests roast goose, but which has such a number of “vertues and uses” that happy must be he who eats plenty of stuffing. With these are Scabious and Southernwood, and herb Johannis. “This is called Saint Johanes Wort”; to quote an old black-letter treatise, “the vertue of it is thus, yf it be put in a manne’s house, there shall come no wycked spirit therein.”

The list comes to an end with Taney, Vervain, Wormwood, Woodsage, and Yar-

row. The list altogether comprises some sixty species of English Medicinal Herbs, all of which form part of the herbalist’s regular stock-in-trade, and for which there is a constant and regular demand which shows how deeply rooted in popular affection are these simple remedies.

Other herbs there are more potent and dangerous, which the herbalist must keep apart for special needs, and can only retail with due precautions. These are Foxglove, and the Deadly Nightshade, and the Hemlock, the juice of which is as fatal now as in the days of Socrates, with Aconite of poisonous fame, and others with noxious properties, and unfitted for general circulation.

In contrast with the modest pretensions of the herbalist of the present day, we may pay an imaginary visit to one of the fraternity who flourished more than a couple of centuries ago, and whose works, as we have seen, are still in credit among the craft—namely, “one Nicholas Culpeper, gent., Student in Astrology and Physick, in Spittlefields, next door to the Red Lyon.” No venerable-bearded sage is he, but young, dark, and handsome, with fiercely-curved moustache, long love-locks, and large soft, dark, and magnetic eyes. A fine embroidered collar sets off his dark curling ringlets, and his black silk doublet and grand silk cloak hung upon him in jaunty becoming folds. If an inkhorn hangs at his girdle instead of a scabbard, and if he fingers the pages of a treatise instead of the hilt of a rapier, it is because such is his humour, and the fashion of the time. It is the Commonwealth, mark you, and royster-ing blades are out of fashion.

But Master Nicholas is fully instructed in all the lore of the astrologers and thau-maturgists: to cast your nativity, or divine your horoscope, is but child’s play to him. He is concerned, too, about the fate of nations. For him, young as he is, the universe holds few secrets, neither the elementary world nor the celestial world, and he has an eye for the secret essences, not only of the animal, but also the vegetable kingdom. For there are ghosts of plants, he will tell you, as well as of once living souls.

“For, indeed, though a plant be burnt to ashes, yet, by a secret and wonderful power of the Almighty, whereby he teaches wisdom to the sons of wisdom, it retains still the same form it had before, though not visible to the eye of the vulgar.”

And if the planets ruled, in their inex-

orable sway, the destinies of every living thing, they also presided over every organ of the human frame, and over every herb of the field, however humble; and, having once settled under what planetary influence such a herb might grow, its virtues for that part of the human system which was ruled by the same planet, might surely be inferred. But for the rest, he had a wonderful knowledge of the various native herbs, and an excellent power of description.

Master Culpeper died in the very prime of life; but he left behind him his universal remedy, the *Aurum Potabile*, which cures all diseases, inasmuch as it exhilarates the heart and vital spirits; and which, with the sale of his treatises, afforded material consolation to his widow, Alice. The widow, however, in editing his writings, complained that she had been forestalled by unauthorized editions of his latest works, which were altogether spurious and worthless, adducing among other proofs of the same, the following morsel of internal evidence: "Neither can it be thought that in such a solemn valediction, he could possibly forget his wonted respects to the College of Doctors." In the genuine treatise he by no means forgets to show his contempt and dislike for the "upstart Colledge," and leaves the enjoyment of these feelings as a legacy to his successors—a bequest of which the fraternity of herbalists seem to have taken full advantage, even to the present day.

TOLTECS AND AZTECS.

MAN is, and always has been, a strange mixture. There is a deal in him of the tiger, or the monkey, or both. He has, for instance, always been great at killing. The old Aztecs did it wholesale as a religious ceremony, never slaying any one in battle if they could help it, but carrying off their prisoners by the hundreds to be sacrificed to the gods. The modern Europeans do it equally wholesale, when the snarling of French against German becomes unbearable, or when it suits the Czar's pleasure to take away another instalment from the "Sick Man's" property. If a man dies, it does not very much matter whether he is caught and fastened by the leg on the Aztec "gladiatorial stone"—you can see one of them in the new museum at Mexico—and armed only with a wooden sword, set to fight champions who

had Obsidian blades as sharp as lancets, or whether he is struck down with a rifle bullet and left to die amid the snow of the Balkans, or trampled into clay during one of the desperate *mêlées* at Plevna, or torn to pieces with Krupp's shells at Gravelotte.

No one defends human sacrifices, while a great many defend aggressive war; that is one difference. Another is that the Aztecs believed the most glorious of all deaths, and that which ensured the quickest passage to the realms of bliss, was to be offered up to one of the gods, whereas few, except Mahomedans, have believed anything equivalent about those slain in battle.

But, besides killing, man has almost everywhere gone in for building. From Baalbec and Palmyra to Easter Island, from Java and Cambodia to the "mound cities" of Ohio, the earth is full of his works. Sometimes, as in the case of the "mound cities," and the avenues of rude granite pillars at Karnac, in Brittany, the builders cannot even be guessed at. Sometimes, as in the case of the Mexican pyramids, and temples, and palaces, we know their name, but are wholly in the dark as to their parentage. It was the Toltecs, humane, civilised predecessors of the Aztecs, who, the latest archaeologists assure us, filled the Mexican upland valley, and Yucatan, and other parts of Central America, with vast structures, often covered with most elaborate carving.

But who were the Toltecs? And why are some parts of Mexico and the neighbouring countries full of their work, while in others there is no trace of them? A suggestion towards answering this last query may be the absence or presence of suitable stone. That to a great extent determines the architecture of a country.

In England, along the oolite, every farm-house is a miniature Tudor mansion, while on the clay lands, houses of the same class, being brick, are as ugly and commonplace as the others are picturesque.

So through a great part of China—the land is as stoneless as a Russian steppe—houses, pagodas, all are of wood, and were the "yellow race" to migrate or die out, in a short time almost all traces of Chinese culture would have passed away.

To answer the first question, you naturally compare the building and the carving with that of other nations. And the resemblances are so many and yet so slight, that you soon give up in despair.

The pottery of the Toltecs, for instance, has a general likeness to that of the old Peruvians; but then many of the vases have a Greek look—some resembling those dug by Dr. Schliemann, in the lower strata of that succession of cities, one of which was Troy; some as graceful as the most purely "classical" forms. Then, again, they built pyramids, as did the old Egyptians. But a Toltec pyramid is almost always truncated, the top being often the site of a temple, placed there to be seen afar off, or it may be to avoid the floods to which, in prehistoric times, the Mexican valley may have been subject.

Have they any connection with the Ohio "mounds"? Seemingly none, for, while the Toltec structures are truncated stone pyramids, the mounds are of earth, roughly shaped like colossal beavers, bison, and other creatures.

Lastly, there is the sculpture. This is sometimes as fresh as if done yesterday; for, in those buildings which the Spaniards occupied, they were careful to plaster over the "idoltrous" work, that their most Christian eyes might not be offended thereat. So that explorers like M. Charnay, who, following up Stephens, Waldeck, Maudsley, and others, has been working this still only half-touched field have only to carefully pick out the covering and take a "squeeze" of what lies below it.

Well, some of this carving—that on the "nunnery" at Chichen-itza, columns and capitals in the "castillo" of the same place, cornices and façades there and in other places—is singularly Romanesque in character. Sometimes there is the lozenge-diaper work and the dog-tooth moulding which we call "Norman;" sometimes the cable work—like interlacing serpents—which is seen alike on Irish crosses and Norse monuments.

Some, again, have round their sides thoroughly cross-legged figures with turbans, Hindoo in character; while several of the statues found at Tlascala are, in head-dress and type of face, strangely like the earliest Egyptian work!

Again, M. Charnay sets side by side the Temple of the Sun at Palenque and a Japanese temple, showing that in shape of roof and manner in which it is supported, the two are identical. A good deal of the decorations in the Palenque niches and corridors is as like the carved work at Nikko as it is possible for stone work to be like wood.

Another point is that all the lines are

horizontal, as those of a Greek temple: no idea of the arch; nothing to "lift up the thoughts," as they say the vertical lines of the Gothic do.

Lastly, a great deal of the carving is like what an architecturally-minded child invents as filling up for its cathedral fronts, etc. These foliated crosses, with figures covered with bracelets and necklaces and wearing feather helmets standing near them, certainly belong to the baby style of ornamentation. The explanation is that, for figures of the gods and sacred inscriptions, and such like, there was a conventional method from which the artist was not allowed to depart. Anyhow, in every case, much better and wholly different work lies close by.

One thing strikes everybody: these Toltecs—if such they were—had remarkably receding foreheads. One notes that on the medallions, which are as great a feature of the room cornices at Palenque as they are of those in a French Renaissance chateau, sometimes the hair is dressed much the same as in the French; but the forehead always slopes back unnaturally—most of all in the figures of the gods, who, with their Roman noses and full, heavy jaws, are not unlike a certain type of Mediæval ecclesiastic. One thinks of the Flat-head Indians, and wonders if similarity of custom shows identity of race.

According to the old Spanish writers, this forehead-flattening was confined to priests and nobles, and they have pretty well died out, though we must not forget that still to be a true-blood Indian is an honour. He ranks not only above Mestizos, Mulattos, and other hybrids, but above the descendants of the Spaniards.

These Toltecs, then—we are as much at sea about them as ever. Were they a part of that race which carved the huge images on Easter Island, and sculptured the earliest monuments in Hindostan, and carried its arts into Egypt, where arts, as well as workmen, underwent a notable change? Was there ever such a race? Who knows?

Tradition says that the Toltecs came in from the north-west, which makes it seem as if some of them came from further Asia, by way of Polynesia.

Their civilisers may have done so; for, as the Peruvians had their Manco Capac, so they had their God of Wisdom, virgin-born Quetzalcoatl, who taught the arts of life, and then disappeared, vowing he should come again. The expectation of

his coming greatly helped Cortez. It gave him allies among Tlascalans, and others of Toltec race, whom the invading Aztecs had crushed down. For them it was the most natural thing in the world that the gods should come among them in the likeness of men. They came in huge living canoes, which, with white wings, were able to move of themselves. They had the lightning and the thunder in their grasp. What most undeceived them was probably the vulgarity of these very earthly divinities; for—as in India nowadays—your native is very clever in finding out a gentleman.

One thing is clear, the Spaniards found a teeming population. Of Yucatan, Montejó, writing in 1529 to the King of Spain, says: "This region is covered with cities, large, beautiful, and new (*muy frescas*).^{*} The terror of the Spaniards had preceded them. Cruelties like that of Alvarado, whom Cortez had left as Lieutenant when he went down to the coast to fight Narvaez, had done their work. This monster in human form yielded to the prayer of the Mexicans that they might be allowed to hold their great May-Day Festival with songs, and dances, and display of jewels and feather-work mantles. "Yes," said the Spaniard, "if you come unarmed, and offer no human victims. And we will come and look on." The Mexicans came accordingly, with no weapons, but with their bravery of gold collars and bracelets, and ankle-rings. The Spanish soldiers came armed; but, as they were always armed, this excited no suspicion. But as soon as the sacred dances began, Alvarado and his followers rushed in and began slaying and stripping the slain. A few scaled the walls; a few lying on the temple floors, shamming death, and so escaped; but most of them, as they rushed to the gates, were driven back by those who held them to those who were slaying within. And so the "May Feast of the War God" was accomplished "without human victims," indeed, but with such outpouring of blood that a fiend might revel in the exchange. "Like water in a heavy shower," a contemporary describes the bloodshed by his countrymen. More than six hundred of the noblest Mexicans—for it was they who alone had a right to join in the ceremony—were thus butchered; and the poor Mexicans must have thought, "the gods are come down among us in the likeness of very cruel men indeed." No wonder that after Mexico was taken the

cities were abandoned at the approach of the invaders, and the inhabitants took to the woods.

What most thinned the numbers, and brutalised the nature of the Indians was, not the diseases brought amongst them by the Spaniards,* not even the waste of war, but the "encomiendas"—i.e., apportionment of a thousand, more or less, to every Spaniard to till his land; work his mines, if he had any; carry his burdens; be, in fact, his slaves. Such a life was intolerable to any one of high spirit; and there was no remedy, no deliverer. Even the Church, which, in Europe in the dark ages, had been the haven of refuge for the oppressed serfs against the conquerors who oppressed them, was closed to the Indian. He was a heathen, and, therefore, outside the pale of humanity. The Spaniards systematically destroyed all native documents, as well as buildings; their wish was to make the people forget their old glories along with their old traditions; and, when they began to convert wholesale, the chief thing they inculcated in their disciples was a hatred of the old faith, the children being trained to report any word or deed they saw at home which savoured of the old customs. Hence, a complete wiping-out of the past; and hence—though the ruins scattered broadcast over the land are probably little older than the advent of the Spaniards—as complete a severance between them and those who now shelter amongst them, as between the ruins of Baalbec and the Arabs who have set up their huts around its pillars.

One cannot give a fair idea of these remains without pictures. You can fancy a great truncated pyramid like those at Itzamal and Chichen-Itza; you can fancy capitals of columns carved with figures, like the oldest Romanesque work in so-called "Norman" churches, and lozenge-shaped diaper work covering flat surfaces, and the sides and edges of pillars enriched

* Europe has often, quite unfairly, charged certain diseases on America. These, as well as small-pox—"great leprosy" so the natives called it—came in with the filthy conquerors. Measles, too, was very fatal. To these Herrera attributes the death of nearly two-thirds the population. Then the conquest caused a fearful famine; and, above all, the devilish cruelty of their taskmasters—wholly beyond the experience of a patient, submissive people—brought on a profound discouragement and apathy. This told directly on the fecundity of the race, besides causing suicides to such an extent, that more than one Spaniard threatened to kill himself, and plague them far worse in the next world, unless they would consent to live and work. No wonder all these cities were soon left desolate and without inhabitants.

with dogtooth and lezenge mouldings, just like the "Norman." But you cannot fancy a colossal head like those forming part of the basement of the Itzamal pyramid. Of one of them which, alas! has since disappeared, Stephens says: "It is seven feet eight inches high, the features formed of small rough stones bedded in mortar, and then perfected with wonderfully hard stucco." Others still remain; and if M. Charnay's sketch is to be trusted, there is a strange likeness between them and the colossal Buddhas (Dai Butz) which used to be so revered at the Japanese temples; but which, now that that versatile people, the Japs, has gone back either to Nature worship, or to no worship at all, they are ready to sell for old copper to any one who will carry them off. Everything is found at Chichen-Itza: nunnery; monastery—for the Toltec faith had its monks and nuns, though they took vows only for a term of years; tennis court—the trick was to drive the ball through a stone ring, several of which are found in their places; palaces; and the grand temple-fortress, crowding the biggest pyramid. All these, the nunnery especially, are enriched with wonderful carvings, cornices, mouldings, architraves filled with what look like arabesques, but which are really inscriptions, of which the key is lost for ever. There is here no "Rosetta stone," with such a translation of the hieroglyphs into some known tongue as might help some future Champollion. The early Spanish writers give little or no help; and, though the modern "Maya" is probably more like the old Toltec than even the Coptic is to the Egyptian of the Pharaohs, that likeness will not help, seeing that the key of the writing is not forthcoming. Chichen-Itza was discovered by chance; some Indians were cutting down the jungle that the grass might grow and give their cattle pasture. Lorillard, rediscovered by M. Charnay on the Guatemalan frontier, is probably "the Phantom City" of Stephens—not that which he speaks of as still inhabited in the old style, the cocks being kept underground lest their crowing should bring in the Spaniards. It, too, has its great pyramid, its temples, its quaintly sculptured lintels. Its name of course, was given by M. Charnay, in honour of his American paymaster. What its real name was even tradition has forgotten. There are plenty of other cities—Kabah, with the same sort of bas-reliefs, and cornices, and pyramids;

Uxmal, richer in its decorations (the façade of the so-called "Governor's house" is a marvel of intricate carving, so is the nunnery). It, too, has a pyramid like the rest, crowned with a very perfect palace called "the Dwarf's house."

"An old woman," says the legend, "vexed at having no children, took an egg, wrapped it in a cotton cloth, put it in a corner, and watched it daily. One morning the shell cracked, and a tiny being stretched out its arms to her. The old woman was in raptures, took it to her heart; got it a nurse with so much milk that at the year's end it walked and talked as well as a full-grown man; but it stopped growing. In her joy the old woman vowed the Dwarf should be a great chief, and sent him to the King for a trial of strength. He begged not to go, but she insisted. So he was brought into the Royal presence, and threw down his glove."

"Lift that stone of three robes," said the King; but the Dwarf went back crying to his mother.

"Nonsense," said she; "if the King can lift it, you can do the same."

The King took up the stone, so did the Dwarf; and in many other feats of strength he kept neck and neck with His Majesty.

At last, in a rage the King said: "You puny little thing, I could stand you on the palm of my hand, and yet you outbrave me. Build a palace higher than this we are in, or you shall die."

Again, the frightened Dwarf went back to the old woman, who comforted him, and bade him go quietly to sleep; and, behold, next morning, mother and son woke up in this "Dwarf's house," the supporting pyramid having also grown up in the night.

The King was startled, and bade the Dwarf bring two bundles of hard-wood stick.

"Now, I'll hit you over the head," said he, "and then you shall hit me."

Off went the Dwarf lamenting to his mother, who put a "tortilla" on his head, and sent him back.

All the courtiers were collected, and the duel began.

The King struck, but every stick was broken one after another, and the Dwarf was not in the least hurt.

"Now," cried he, "it's your Majesty's turn to stand fire."

The King would have shirked, but in the presence of all his nobles he could not go from his word; so the Dwarf

struck, and at the second blow the King's skull was broken in pieces.

The spectators immediately proclaimed the Dwarf their King. But when he went to tell his mother she had disappeared.

Howbeit in Mawi, a village fifty miles off, is a deep well leading to a subterranean passage which reaches to Merida. In this passage runs a river, and there under the shade of a huge tree sits the old woman with a serpent by her side. She doles out water to thirsty passers-by, but will take no money; what she must have are babes, innocent babes, which are at once devoured by her serpent. She is the Dwarf's mother.

Their vast extent has made some think that the buildings in these cities must have been built during many successive centuries. The latest investigators say "No."

The Toltecs had a wonderful genius for building; under Spanish rule they rebuilt Mexico, and Tula, and other cities in an incredibly short space of time; and the task-work under their native Princes was almost as severe as under the Spaniards. They were adepts, too, at carving and moulding in cement. Some of the earlier churches built by them are wonderfully good; and some horses' heads carved soon after the conquest are as good as Greek work.

Indeed, the palace at Mitla, where Quetzalcoatl, the virgin-born, had his last home upon earth, is compared by the architectural writer Viollet-le-Duc to the famous buildings in Cambodia, which the natives of that country are as incapable of raising as they are of solving integral equations. At Mitla there is a marked difference of style in the carving, none of the "conventional" work which, rich and beautifully executed though it is, always strikes one as childish; it is all panelling, and diaper, and rich cornices, either in stone or plaster, or pebbles set in clay; in the building merely perpendicular walls and flat ceilings; none of the overlapping vaults, made by setting each stone a little further out than that below it, which in all the other ruins remind us of the vaulted work of old British tombs.

Talking of British work, the underground galleries found wherever there are ruins—some opened by the Mexican Government, but closed because the Indians seemed disposed to rise in rebellion—remind us of the "covered way" which exists close to every untouched "dolmen," and through which the head of the clan used to creep

into the inner chamber when he wanted to hold converse with, or take counsel of, his ancestors.

At Palenque, as was said, the resemblance to Japanese architecture comes out most strongly; and M. Charnay reminds us that, even now, the average of Japanese vessels wrecked on the Californian coast is two a year. He thinks—and he has seen all most thoroughly—that the civilisers of the Ana-hu-ac (Mexico) were from that side of the world. Who the Aztecs were—who came afterwards as conquerors, entering into the Toltec civilisation, not crushing it out but certainly not improving it—he does not pretend to guess.

We must not be too eager to insist on this Japanese or any other Eastern origin, from supposed shapes seen or imagined in the sculptures. Waldeck, for instance—positive, like all Germans—saw elephants' heads among the masks in the cornices at Copan; whereupon he argued either this was the work of Easterns who had carried with them the memory of the "serpent-handed beast," or it was wrought in the old, old time when the elephant did live in America along with the hipparion and other extinct creatures. But, no; closer investigation proves the supposed elephant-heads to be caricatures—men with long tapir-like noses, others with big, pendulous ears, being found along with them.

These sculptors had a strong sense of humour, though hard usage has pretty well beaten it out of their descendants. The frequent use of the cross—both the Egyptian cross with ring-handle, and the *croix fleurie*—puzzled the Spaniards.* They saw in it a proof that the Devil, for his own ends, uses holy things. Some of the head-dresses on the conventional—what I have called childish—sculptures are just like mitres. We need not call in Satan here, any more than we need to account for the ladies' Louis Quinze head-dresses. Human nature is the same everywhere; and a mitre gives dignity when worn as it ought to be, and accompanied with proper vestments. A clever people, then, were those old palace and pyramid builders—not mere heapers together of huge mounds of stone. They had a calendar, and could foretell eclipses; and not two hundred years ago a good many of them on the Guatemala frontier were still independent—fighting one another, though the Spaniard was steadily annexing them.

* You also find among the ruins that form of the cross called "swastika," common to Egyptian monuments and pre-Christian Norse runes.

Their picture-writing—preserved in the Ramirez and Perez manuscripts—resembles the Egyptian frescoes in this, that the conqueror is always represented much larger than the conquered. The defeat of a nation is marked by a small corniced building, before which stands a huge invader with lighted torch.

There is plenty yet to be explored, though every year something is lost by decay, or through the mischievousness of the Indians, who pick out the mosaic, believing that, after a time, it will turn into gold.

The whole land round Palenque (Tollan was its old name) is full of remains. José Calderon, in 1774, found there eighteen palaces, twenty other big buildings, and one hundred and sixty-eight houses, in one week. It is now all forest, the trees shooting up so fast that they make, in a month, the ring which old naturalists used to think marked a year's growth; hence the calculations of data based on the number of rings in a tree, need to be divided by twelve. This monstrous vegetation shows the dampness of the climate; and hence the difficulty of taking proper "squeezes." These have to be dried round huge fires, and packed away before the moisture has made them flabby and taken the sharpness out of the impressions. Of course paper is better than plaster, being a hundredth part of the weight; but the process is more difficult. It is often, however, the only way; for many of the best slabs are so placed that they cannot be photographed; and drawings, such as Stephens gives, must always be unsatisfactory.

And the people? Degraded; their Christianity much like the old heathenism save that it has no human sacrifices. They still keep up their old dances. Some of the Mestizas are beautiful (says M. Charnay) beyond expression; but they are poor creatures, given to destroy telegraphs for the sake of the wire; and of all their old arts only possessing that of shaping gourds, while on the tree, into various elegant forms, and then painting them with colours which are faster than any known to Europeans.

RED TOWERS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Gerald," "Alicia," etc., etc.

PART I.

CHAPTER VI. VINCENT.

PAUL's little world at River Gate had not been very peaceful while he was away.

He had the best of it, out in the quiet country, with the easy and agreeable companionship of M. de Montmirail, and the silent friendliness of cows, sheep, and butterflies.

Vincent was in a terrible temper that Sunday afternoon. He visited his private griefs on his mother and the servants, finding out that his packing for India had been entirely neglected, though, in fact, her head and their hands had been busy with it for a week past. He tormented every one frightfully for about two hours that hot afternoon—every one but Celia, who kept prudently out of the way. At last, Mrs. Percival began to see that he was growing more calm, and beginning to believe her assurances that everything had been thought of. She could not exactly be angry with Vincent, when he was going to leave her the next day, probably for years; but his selfish, inconsiderate, ungrateful complaints and grumbling, were almost too much for her generally charming temper, and she was looking quite pale and tired when she escaped at last into her shady sitting-room, sank into a low chair, and took up a fan. Hers, however, was one of those natures which rebounds instantly, and sees the bright side of things in spite of itself. Of course she loved her son, and his going away was a serious trouble to her; but, at the same time, she was conscious that his departure meant peace. Perhaps, after all, he would be ordered home before so very long; and in the meantime Celia's affairs would be happily and irrevocably settled; there would be no more anxiety on that account. But Mrs. Percival decided, as she fanned herself, that she really could not tell Vincent of Celia's engagement to-day. Celia must be left to manage her own affairs; and, being now harder-hearted than in the morning, Mrs. Percival reflected that Vincent was perfectly able to take care of himself. The Canon was right; neither of these young people was a fool.

As Mrs. Percival comforted herself thus, the door was opened impatiently and Vincent came in. Her little room, and especially her very comfortable sofa, was a favourite refuge of his on these summer afternoons; it looked over trees and down the river, away from the Cathedral, which Vincent did not care to contemplate, and away from its chimes, which he hated to hear.

"Very well," said Mrs. Percival, when her son came in, and flung himself as usual on the sofa. "I see you have a

horrid headache still. So have I. You had better go to sleep for an hour, my dear."

Vincent made no reply at once. Presently he said: "Mother, I have something on my mind."

"I hoped it was all off your mind by this time," said Mrs. Percival. "Something else forgotten?"

"No, no, mother! don't go on plaguing about that. It is something you will have to do for me while I am away."

"Oh certainly! What is it?"

"Take care of Celia."

To say that these words startled Mrs. Percival, would be speaking very mildly. They literally took her breath away. She gasped, and her pale face became crimson. Vincent, staring out of the window, was not instantly aware of her consternation; but her silence made him look at her.

"What's the matter?" he asked, with something like a smile. "I say, what the deuce have I said?"

"Take care of Celia!" Mrs. Percival repeated, in a stifled, horrified whisper.

"You think I ought to make a better match—is that it?" he said coolly. "I think I am old enough to judge for myself. Anyhow, I mean to marry Celia. Not just yet, of course. But I have friends out there who can get me a staff appointment, if they exert themselves; and then, if I can't get leave, she can come out to me. Many girls do the same; it's nothing. As for being poor, of course we shall be poor. You are surprised, of course; you did not expect it. I am rather surprised at myself. But there are times in a man's life when the only thing to say is, 'prudence be hanged!' and this is one of them, my dear mother, you see."

"Vincent, I don't know what to say to you!" exclaimed Mrs. Percival. "How could you? What a dreadful, dreadful thing!"

Her son stared at her now in some astonishment; he had not expected that his announcement would be so terribly hard to swallow. Mrs. Percival started up from her chair, and walked away from him to the farthest window, swinging her fan backwards and forwards violently, while the sudden colour fled from her face, leaving her painfully pale.

"Would any one believe that a woman could be so worldly!" said Vincent in a voice of extreme irritation. "Your niece is left without a penny; you have her to live with you. A pretty girl; more than

that—one of the most beautiful girls in England, and the most taking. You make use of her from morning till night. Your own daughter, if you had one, would not be half such a slave. She tires herself to death doing your flowers and things, and works like a horse entertaining people at your stupid parties. And after all that, because I happen to appreciate her, you speak to me as if I had committed a crime. 'A dreadful, dreadful thing!' How could I—how could I do anything else, I wonder! Upon my word, I don't understand you. The way you take it is extraordinary."

Great are the inconsistencies of human nature. This same man, twenty-four hours before, would have said it was impossible that he should marry his cousin; would have hardly confessed, then, that he was very much in love with her. Strange inconsistency, and strange effect of a little opposition!

During these disagreeable remarks of Vincent's, Mrs. Percival stood at the window and collected her wits. She realised that the person to be blamed was not Vincent, but Celia, who must have deceived him for her own amusement in some unaccountable way. It must have been merely for amusement; she could not think of jilting Paul. Vincent, poor thing! might be carried away by his feelings—a girl like Celia, never: at least Mrs. Percival could hardly believe it.

"Does Celia know?" she said, without looking round.

"I told her yesterday," Vincent answered. "She would not listen. I suppose she thought it wouldn't do: girls don't understand. But she will find I am not to be put off like that. As to saying anything more to her now, I am not sure. I shall write to her. In the meanwhile, you have got to see that nobody else carries her off. Her having no money is a protection, of course: men in these days don't run after poor girls, however pretty they may be."

Vincent's way of talking was characteristic of him, and did not surprise his mother much, though perhaps it struck her more painfully than ever before. However, she was at present possessed by one thought; this affair must be cleared up; whether Celia wished it or not, Vincent must know all, and understand plainly that there was no hope for him.

Mrs. Percival turned away from the window, came back to her chair, and sat down. Her face was full of trouble; she

played with her fan, and did not look at Vincent, who watched her with a curious, sardonic expression.

"I am to understand then, Vincent," she said, "that Celia has refused you?"

"Something of the kind," he said. "It was impossible; she couldn't; and so forth. You have brought her up to be as prudent as yourself."

"You need not say that. Besides, Celia has only lived with me for a few months, as you know. She gave you no reason—no real reason, I mean!"

"No. I believe she said what she thought she ought to say. You would object; it would be ruin to me, and the rest of it. All that is my affair, as I shall make her understand. She will say 'yes' in the end."

"I think not, Vincent."

"Why?" he said angrily.

"She ought to have told you herself; it is no use telling half the truth. She was right so far, you know. Your father and I must have objected strongly to such an absurd marriage for you. It would not have been for Celia's happiness either; and I am bound to think of that."

"You had better leave that to us, mother. What do you mean, though?"

"Celia is the kind of girl who ought to marry a rich man. You may believe me, Vincent, when she refused you, she meant it."

"And where is the rich man to come from?" he said, frowning. "Upon my word, you talk in plainer English than most people. Celia a girl to refuse a man because he is poor! Why you should attribute such motives to your niece I cannot conceive," said this suddenly unworldly hero. "She refused me because she thought it was her duty. You can't understand her; she is a far finer girl than you think. Let me tell you she likes me too much to refuse me for any other reason."

"I tell you, Vincent," said his mother, looking at him now, and speaking quite solemnly, "Celia refused you because she means to marry a rich man! And she ought to have told you the whole truth about it."

"Nonsense! How could she tell me such a thing as that? You are losing your senses. Besides, it's not true!"

Mrs. Percival flushed a little, but answered him very quietly:

"I have no doubt you made it difficult for her. Now prepare yourself, for I must

tell you what you will think bad news. Celia is engaged. Now you know the truth about it."

"To a rich man?" asked Vincent, with sneering coolness, though his eyes flashed, and a curious white look came into his face.

"Yes, to a rich man. No one knows of the engagement except your father and myself. Unless you insist, perhaps I need not tell you who it is. He does not belong to this neighbourhood."

"Young Romaine, for instance?" said Vincent; and he yawned.

"Why do you think so? Yes, it is Paul Romaine. And I think Celia is a fortunate girl."

"How long has this been going on?"

"Since he left Oxford in June. He was here for a few days then; you were away."

"And what excellent object was gained by not telling me?"

"I don't know, Vincent, really," his mother said, after a moment's hesitation. "Celia wished most particularly that no one should know. We wanted to have a quiet, comfortable summer. He being so young, there was no hurry, and he was going abroad for some weeks—he has only just come back, you know. Your father and I agreed with Celia: we were glad to say nothing. I meant to tell you about it in my first letter this week. Of course, when we leave Woolsborough and go to Holm, it won't matter; everybody must know soon. And if I could have foreseen such a complication as this—well, I have had my fears—but your father and I both thought that you and Celia were too sensible for any nonsense, and we knew you did not particularly like Paul; and we thought it would be pleasanter."

Vincent threw himself back on the sofa, and burst into a loud fit of laughter. His mother, it must be confessed, felt more inclined to cry. In the course of her easy, luxurious life, she had hardly ever met with anything so disagreeable.

"Miss Celia—well, she is a clever girl!" Vincent exclaimed at last.

"If she has encouraged you—if she has flirted with you, she has behaved shamefully," said Mrs. Percival. "My dear, believe me, I am most dreadfully sorry that this has happened."

"So am I. You have made me look like an uncommon fool. But you need not blame Celia; she snubbed me as much as she could, and made me very angry."

He was quiet enough now: he even

seemed, for some mysterious reason, to be in a better temper than before he heard the news which made his case hopeless. Mrs. Percival saw that the awful scene of ravings and reproaches, which she had feared, was not to take place after all; she felt comforted accordingly.

"I do hope you will forgive us, Vincent dear," she said. "You know what a trouble this is to me; and I feel that we have all treated you so badly. One tries to act for the best, and then this sort of thing happens. I think Celia must be very sorry too. I am sure she is—she likes you so much, and you have been so happy together all this time. Can't you understand a little, dear, that we didn't wish to interfere with such a nice, cheerful summer? But now I do hope you will go away and forget all about it. I assure you Celia was not quite the right sort of girl for you to marry, I mean—never could have been. She is very dear, and nice, and all that; but there is not very much in her. If either of you had had enough money—even then I should have been sorry—I couldn't have approved. First cousins, too—such a pity!"

As Mrs. Percival gently chattered thus, she was looking her sweetest; the trouble had gone out of her eyes, and they were smiling and shining as usual; her pretty hands caressed her fan. One of the little dogs came scratching at the door before she had quite done; she got up and let him in, talking all the time. She had had a bad quarter of an hour, certainly; but like a certain King of old, she now seemed to think that its bitterness was past.

"And you are going to marry Celia to that boy! Celia!" Vincent muttered half to himself, without taking any notice of her explanations. "That is what you call a rich man! And you think those two suited to each other, do you?"

"He is a rich man, and a very dear fellow," said Mrs. Percival rather faintly.

"A muff and a milksop, with his head wrapped up in books and organs. However, if you are pleased—and Celia—"

He got up and marched out of the room.

Mrs. Percival drew a long breath, fanned herself, and stroked her little dog.

"Oh, my Toto!" she said. "Why are not men as nice as little dogs?"

When Captain Percival left his mother, he went heavily downstairs and out into the garden, feeling himself a terribly injured man. This concealment of a fact that touched him so nearly might be apologised

for; it could hardly be forgiven. They had all behaved to him abominably. If he had been a gossiping girl, they could not have treated him with more insulting distrust. Early in the summer, when this was arranged, he would not have cared a straw who Celia married: now it was a different thing. Celia herself must have known perfectly well that he was falling in love with her; her behaviour had been heartless, especially yesterday, when she laughed at him, and drew him on—yes, she certainly drew him on, only to laugh at him. He would not confess it to his mother, but Celia's behaviour had made him very sore. He had been ready to give up everything for her. She, with her affairs comfortably arranged, must indeed have laughed at him for a fool. She unselfish? No, truly. "Anyhow I couldn't do this," she said; no, for a very good reason—I am going to do something I like better. And that maddening smile in her eyes all the time.

Vincent paced up and down the garden, thinking at first that he would go to London that night, and see none of them again. People who had treated him so odiously were not worth a regret. His father, too; but he did not waste many thoughts on him, not having much esteem for his father. His mother and Celia were the people he wanted to punish. After all, starting off at once would be uncomfortable to himself, and would do them no harm; they might even be glad to get rid of him. Wandering along, his angry face bent towards the ground, he had reached one of the lower walks of the garden, a grass walk, backed by a tall hedge of laurustinus, bordered with a bright confusion of flowers, and looking straight over the old wall to the river, the meadows, the soft distant view of that country through which Paul was now returning. And at the end of this walk there was a summer-house, fenced in by roses; and in the shadow, as he came near, Vincent caught sight of a figure in a white dress. He had been arranging with himself, a moment before, that he would treat Celia with the coldest contempt, and hardly even speak to her, except to say good-bye. But this resolution had been made when Celia was nowhere near; and now another moment brought him to the summer-house. She got up, looking pale in the trembling shadows, and her eyes were anxious, though she smiled.

"Is the packing all done?" she said. "Does Aunt Flo want me?"

"No, she doesn't want you," said Vincent; "but I do. Don't be frightened. I only wish to offer you my—congratulations, I suppose, on your brilliant prospects."

Celia looked at him; she was not smiling now. His look and tone of bitter coldness and anger roused some defiance to meet it. She coloured, drew herself up, and waited silently.

"I have only just been told what I should have known all the summer," Vincent went on. "I consider that I have been abominably treated. I have been cheated and deceived. My mother knows what I think, and I shall not forgive her or my father. As to *you*"—and his voice suddenly changed—"Celia—Celia!"

It was a cry of real passion, and Celia was frightened; not so much perhaps at him, as at the sudden and overpowering wave of feeling in herself which answered it. What was to happen, indeed, if she could not hold her own now!

Vincent came a step nearer, and took both her hands, looking down into her eyes and speaking in a low voice, terrible to her from its very restraint. She bit her lips and stood before him like a statue.

"Has my mother told me the truth?" he said. "Is it true that you are engaged to young Romaine? Why did not you tell me yesterday, or weeks ago? Why did you make me love you, only to end like this? Answer me, Celia."

"Because—if you were nice like other people," murmured Celia in desperation, "one wouldn't be afraid to tell you things. As to making you—you know that is false. I have done nothing of the kind. When you said those things yesterday I was dreadfully sorry; but I did not bring it on myself, you know I did not. Let me go, please. Yes, I am engaged. Let me go."

He dropped her hands, but still stood in the door of the summer-house, so that she could not pass.

"Why did not you tell me yesterday, in the boat?" he said. "Why were you afraid? What could I have done?"

"You might have upset the boat," she answered, with a faint smile. "You said you would, once."

"A witch like you could not have been drowned."

"A baby could—and you were not sure which I was, yesterday."

She was glad, for a moment, of this

return to the old terms of chaffing and nonsense that seemed natural between them. But, after all, an angry distance would have been better. The anger was fading out of his face, but it was not succeeded by indifference.

"Celia, you are an awful girl," he said. "You break one's heart, and won't let one be angry with you. What nonsense it is, this engagement! My mother made it up, of course. You *can't* marry a fellow like that—*you*. Break it off, Celia dear, for my sake, and come out to me as soon as I can send for you—or marry me to-morrow morning, if you will. I felt sure, don't you see, that you would not say no, and I began telling mother my plans just now, and she crushed me with this horrible news. I daresay it drove me mad, at first, and I did not know what I was saying. If I have spoken to you like a brute, forgive me, Celia!"

If Vincent could have known how Celia was fighting against herself at that moment, and how joyfully half of her would have given itself to him, his victory would not have been doubtful for two minutes longer. But he did not know, and thought her coldness greater than it really was; and so he went on talking, with a doubt of his success, which every moment became more unlikely. If Celia had time to think, the prudent and the practical were sure to gain the day. And then, long before his hopeless pleading was finished, came Mrs. Percival's voice calling over the garden—"Celia, Celia"—and his cousin turned to him, her eyes wonderful in their depth of smiling blue, and said:

"Some day you will know it is all for the best. Look here; cousins have a right to be very fond of each other, and I shall always be very fond of you."

Vincent laughed.

"Cold comfort, my dear," he said. "Fond or not, I have been horribly treated. Celia, I think you might kiss me once, to make up for it all."

"Aunt Flo is coming," Celia said; but she did not think it necessary to carry her snubbing any further: poor Vincent was quite tame now, and was going away to-morrow.

They strolled up the garden together; and when Mrs. Percival met them, though Vincent was melancholy, Celia was laughing. Mrs. Percival looked at her niece with admiration and wonder.